

STATEMENT OF JANET SNYDER MATTHEWS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 929, A BILL TO ESTABLISH THE LAND BETWEEN THE RIVERS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

March 15, 2007

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 929, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to establish the Land Between the Rivers National Heritage Area in the State of Illinois. The Department does not support enactment of this bill at this time.

Before a national heritage area is designated by Congress, a comprehensive feasibility study should be completed that evaluates an area by applying criteria developed by the Department and Congress. The study undertaken by Southern Illinois University provides a good beginning in identifying the many stories and variety of resources found within the region. However, we believe that H.R. 929 should not be enacted until an adequate feasibility study is completed that yields the necessary information to demonstrate that the proposed national heritage area meets the criteria for designation. We also believe that individual bills proposing to designate new national heritage areas should be deferred until program legislation is enacted that establishes guidelines and a process for the designation of national heritage areas. Last year, the Administration sent to Congress a legislative proposal to establish such guidelines and a process for designation. Bills were introduced in the 109th Congress (S. 243, H.R. 760 and H.R. 6287) that incorporated the majority of the provisions of the Administration's proposal, and S. 243 passed the Senate. During the 110th Congress, a similar heritage area program bill, S. 278, has

been introduced, and we look forward to continuing to work with Congress on this very important issue.

H.R. 929 would establish the Land Between the Rivers National Heritage Area, including Kincaid Mound, Fort de Chartres, Kaskaskia, Fort Massac, Wilkinsonville Contonment, the Lewis and Clark Sculpture, Flat Boat, Cave-in-Rock, the Shawneetown Bank Building, the Iron Furnace, the Crenshaw “Slave House,” Roots House, the site of the Lincoln-Douglas debate, certain sites associated with John A. Logan, the Fort Defiance Planning Map, Mound City National Cemetery, and Riverlore Mansion, and any other sites within 17 counties in the State of Illinois that the management entity determines to be appropriate to include. It designates the Southern Illinois University Carbondale as the management entity.

The Department has concerns about the limited scope of the legislation. For example, H.R. 929 does not make the case that this region is a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape, unified around one nationally important story that sets it aside from all other areas. The boundaries for the proposed area are not defined. While complete boundaries that encompass the key contributing components of the nationally important story are refined during the development of the management plan, the main region is typically stated within the legislation as a demonstration of where most of the grassroots efforts are taking place.

Also, H.R. 929 does not define the role and functions of the management entity or direct the management entity to develop and submit a management plan for the heritage area. The role and functions of a management entity are defined during development of the feasibility study as they

require concurrence of the residents. Legislative language for a management plan includes a description of comprehensive policies, goals, strategies, and recommendations for telling the story of the area. It specifies existing and potential sources of funding or economic development strategies to protect, enhance, and interpret the area. The plan also includes a description of actions and commitments that governments, private organizations, and citizens will take to protect, manage, and develop resources of the heritage area. H.R. 929 does not include any standard legislative language for management planning. The diversity of perspective and goals of any heritage area requires a written agreement on how to proceed. Specific guidelines regarding these issues were provided in the proposed legislation for heritage areas developed and presented to Congress by the Department last year.

A final concern is that H.R. 929 does not authorize any appropriations to provide financial assistance in conducting and carrying out the activities and functions of the heritage area.

The Department has consistently taken the position that proposed national heritage areas follow the proven path of those achieving designation in recent years. We cannot support H.R. 929 at this time as it does not meet the specific criteria for designation demonstrated by the completion of an adequate feasibility study. We are, however, fully prepared to provide advice or assistance in the completion of a feasibility study that meets our professional standards and provides Congress with the necessary information and assessment upon which to base its decision regarding designation in the future.

If the committee chooses to move forward with this bill, the Department would recommend that the bill be amended to include an additional requirement for an evaluation to be conducted by the Secretary, three years prior to the cessation of federal funding under this act. The evaluation would examine the accomplishments of the heritage area in meeting the goals of the management plan; analyze the leveraging and impact of investments to the heritage area; identify the critical components of the management structure and sustainability of the heritage area; and recommend what future role, if any, the National Park Service should have with respect to the heritage area.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.